as is normally done for a passport and visa. This travel is open to all Indian and Pakistani nationals.

The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad link would significantly enhance people-to-people contact across the LoC. The LoC is not a recognized international boundary and the system followed does not compromise our position on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Travel on the bus would be allowed only after due procedure and checks to prevent misuse.

Conditions imposed by Pakistan for new CBMs

1742. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan has taken a position that no new Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) will be taken unless the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service is started without passports and visa; and

(b) if so, Government's response in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Shortage of Staff in Visa Division

1743. SHRIMATIVANGAGEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Visa Division employees were working even on holidays despite facing severe staff shortage with the workload increasing to manifold;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken/to be taken by the Government to ease the workload of the employees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) Due to non-cooperative approach of some of the officials in the passport Offices, the pendency had increased, resulting in delays in issue of passports. Nearly, 45000